

Food and Nutrition Services

SEPTEMBER 2015

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Welcome- Nutrition Program Specialists

Ellen Rees and Lauren Sciacca are new Nutrition Program Specialists in the Food and Nutrition Services Section. Ellen joins the section September 8, 2015 and will take the Southwest Central Region. Lauren joins the section September 14, 2015 and will take the Southeast Region. Welcome Ellen and Lauren!

Welcome to the 2015-16 School Year!

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) applauds all of you for your efforts and achievements and we will continue to work through the challenges together. We are here, to hear you, and help in whatever manner possible.

Can water be offered in place of milk?

Water **cannot** be offered in place of milk. While water must be made available to students during meal service, program operators are not to promote or offer water or any other beverage as an alternative selection to fluid milk throughout the food service area. Milk is a required component in the meal patterns. However, water must be available in the food service area and can be available on the service line. Additional guidance can be found at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/water-availability-during-nsfp-meal-service>.



Matthew Essner, Director of Food Distribution

After nine years serving the Division of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), we are saddened to announce Matthew Essner's last day with the Section of FNS was Wednesday, August 19. Matthew has accepted a position as Midwest Regional Sales Manager for the education segment with Red Gold, Inc.

Of the nine years with FNS, Matthew served seven years as Director of Food Distribution. During his tenure, he contributed much to the program as he was ever-vigilant for quality of commodities available for order with an updated and more efficient computerized system.

We wish Matthew the best in his new position!

METHODS OF COLLECTION AND MEAL COUNTING

All meal counting centers must have a built-in accounting system at the point of service to record numbers of free, reduced price and full price meals served daily.

The point of service is that point at which it can be determined that the food items served or selected constitute a reimbursable meal.

IF an LEA's meal counting and claiming procedures have changed, an updated [Methods of Collection and Meal Counting](#) form must be submitted via email, mail or fax.

Also Section VI of the form is the LEA's documentation to utilize the **flexibility for establishing submission of free and reduced price meal applications as the effective date of eligibility**, rather than the date the official approves it. The form can be found at this link: http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/dac_forms/MO5002759.pdf.



Whole Grain-Rich Exemption Request

USDA memo SP 20-2015 allows Local Education Agencies (LEAs) the ability to request an exemption from the whole grain-rich requirement for school years (SY) 2014-2015 and 2015-2016.

LEAs must request exemptions to specific products, if the LEA can demonstrate a hardship in procuring, preparing, or serving compliant whole grain-rich products that are acceptable to students.

LEAs granted the exemption must comply with the SY 2013-2014 requirement to offer at least half of the grain items as whole grain-rich.

LEAs may retain the previously approved pasta exemptions and do not need to reapply for the pasta items already approved.

The request form will need a list of each product with written justification or other documented evidence (e.g. photos, meal count records). LEAs must submit this form to request the exemption.

An email will be returned to the Authorized Representative regarding approval or denial of the exemption. For additional guidance, LEAs can contact (573) 751-3526 or foodandnutritionservices@dese.mo.gov.



Flexibility Notification for Directly Certified Students

The LEAs may consider the effective **date of eligibility for free school meal or milk benefits to be the date the automated Direct Certification (DC) data matching file is available** that first identifies the student as eligible for DC, rather than the date the LEA accesses the file. This also applies to any student(s) who receive extended eligibility.

The date of eligibility will always be the date FNS announces the new DC file has been generated and is available to the LEAs.

As an example: FNS announces a new DC file is available on 09/02. An LEA accesses the file on 9/08 and determines DC benefits for eligible students. The LEA extends eligibility to other household members of students on the DC list on 9/15. All students (those on the DC file, and those with extended eligibility) may have an effective date of 09/02 rather the date the students were identified and processed at the LEA level.

Homeless, Migrant, Runaway, Head Start, Even Start or Foster Children Directly Certified via a list: LEAs may consider the effective date of eligibility for free school meal or milk benefits to be the date the LEA receives such lists, rather than the date the school official processes the documentation.

LEAs must notify FNS if it plans to implement this flexibility.

LEAs that choose this flexibility are encouraged to resolve and implement DC matches as early as possible upon receipt of appropriate documentation. The form can be found at this link: http://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/dac_forms/MO5003045.pdf.

Paid Lunch Equity (PLE)

An exemption to the PLE requirements can be obtained for LEAs in strong financial standing through School Year 2016-2017. An exemption can be granted if 1) the LEA requesting the exemption has been certified as meeting the meal pattern requirements and 2) can demonstrate that the required increase to paid lunch prices or revenue contributions would cause the LEA to exceed the 3-month operating balance.

An exemption must be requested annually and the LEA must submit a letter via email, mail or fax. **The USDA memo SP 19-2015: Paid Lunch Equity: Guidance for School Years 2015-16 and 2016-17** found at <https://dese.mo.gov/sites/default/files/SP19-2015s.pdf> contains the following attachment:

- **PLE exemption– Factors for Consideration** (pg 1) and
- **Additional Considerations** (pg 2).

The LEA must address all factors (page 1 and 2) when applying for an exemption.



Extending Flexibility for RCCIs in the NSLP

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USDA issued memo [SP 38-2012](#) on July 16, 2012, which allowed Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs), with State Agency approval, to serve the meal pattern for the highest age/grade group served to all residential students.

In order to utilize this flexibility the RCCI must meet all three of the following criteria:

- 1) be a juvenile detention or correctional facility;
- 2) serve children in different age/grade groups; and

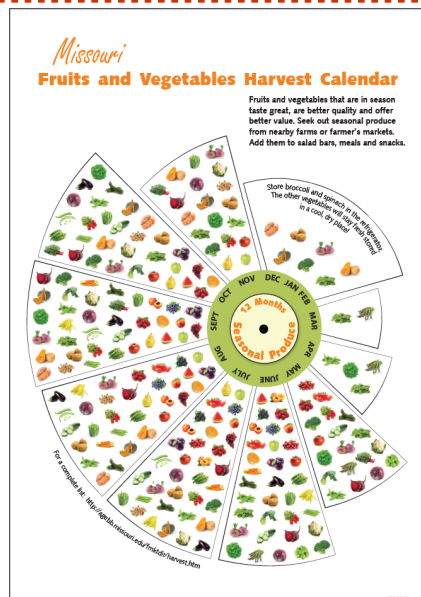
- 3) have legitimate safety concerns, or State juvenile justice laws or regulations related to offering meals with varying amounts of food within the same meal pattern.

To allow flexibility to RCCIs that are not juvenile justice facilities, USDA issued memo [SP 48-2013](#) on June 25, 2013, to extend the flexibility if the RCCI can demonstrate operational limitations to separating age/grade groups and can show legitimate safety concerns if students are served different portions.

RCCIs must submit a written request to the Food and Nutrition Services Section, DESE, clearly articulating the safety concerns.

It is anticipated that the extension of this flexibility will help address the safety concerns raised by RCCIs, and result in an overall improvement of the meals they serve.

For additional guidance, contact your regional Nutrition Program Specialists at (573) 751-3526.



TEAM NUTRITION'S HARVEST CALENDAR!

NEW from Missouri Team Nutrition is Missouri's Fruits and Vegetables Harvest Calendar (24" w x 36" h poster)! Schools participating in the National School Lunch Program are welcomed to place their order for this colorful calendar promoting Missouri's bountiful and seasonal harvest.

To place an order, please visit our Culinary Skills Institute web site at <http://health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/culinaryskills/> to download a request for literature form and follow written instructions found within the form. Stock #285. Limit 10 per order.

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<http://dese.mo.gov/financial-admin-services/food-nutrition-services>



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